

# Phase 2 Engagement Summary

June 16, 2025



# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that North York Centre is located on lands within the City of Toronto that are the traditional territory of the Anishnabeg, Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples, and now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The lands in Toronto where North York Centre is located are covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

## **African Ancestral Acknowledgement**

The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

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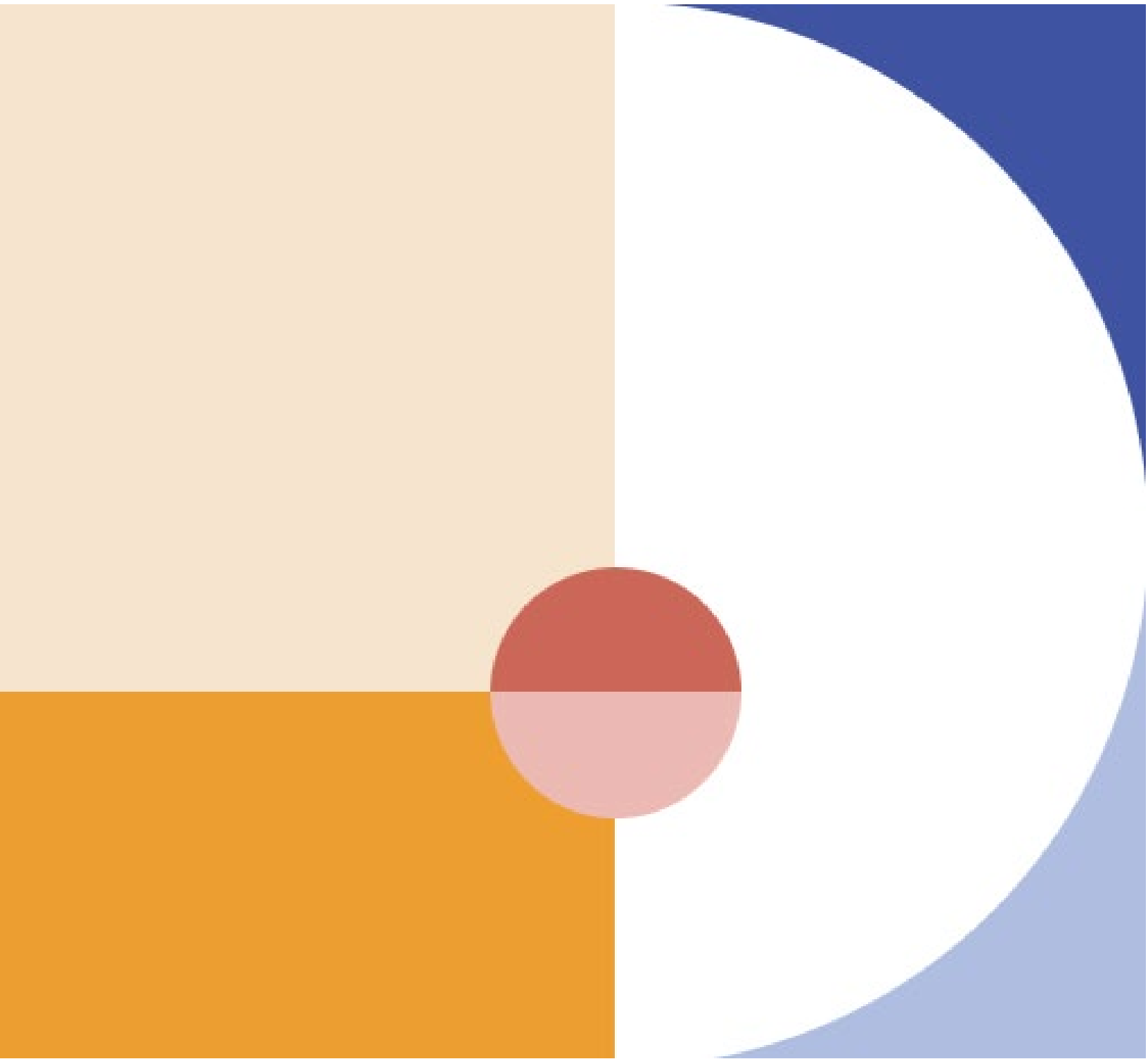
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# Executive Summary



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Toronto is undertaking a review of the North York Centre Secondary Plan to refresh the vision for the Centre and develop new policy directions to shape the area as an inclusive, resilient and complete community.

Phase 2 engagement for North York at the Centre took place between January and May 2025. It was focused on presenting the options evaluation and Emerging Preferred Option (EPO). The EPO was developed based on the outcome of the evaluation of the options and included proposed plans for land use, building types and heights, parks and open space, public realm, and mobility, as well as recommended policy directions on topics such as community services and facilities, inclusive economic development, arts and culture, action on climate change and cultural heritage.

### Communications

Phase 2 communication materials included:

- A dedicated project web page at [toronto.ca/nycentre](https://toronto.ca/nycentre);
- Three e-updates distributed to 344 people from [nycentre@toronto.ca](mailto:nycentre@toronto.ca);
- Six social media posts by CityPlanTO on Instagram and X , plus multiple Instagram 'stories';
- A Notice of Public Meeting mailed to 48,094 households and businesses;
- Councillor's e-newsletter;
- Postcards distributed at Community Pop-ups; and
- Project update letters sent to two First Nations.

### Activities and Events

Phase 2 engagement activities and events included:

- Indigenous engagement, including meetings with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC), the Local Indigenous Community and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation;
- Two Local Advisory Committee Meetings;
- Six Community Workshops hosted by LAC members, engaging 125 members of the community;
- Three Public Consultation Centres attended by over 350 people;
- An online Emerging Preferred Option Survey completed by 1,086 respondents between March 24, 2025 and May 4, 2025;
- Two Community Pop-ups; and,
- Project team attendance at three Councillor-led Town Halls.

Community engagement continues and an addendum to this Phase 2 Engagement Summary may be provided as needed to reflect additional feedback received in Phase 2.

## What We Heard

The project team received detailed feedback on elements of the EPO in relation to Buildings, Land Use, Public Realm, Parks and Environment and Mobility. Overall, the community feedback reflects divisions in the community on some aspects of how the Centre should grow and change. In particular, there were mixed perspectives on expanding the Secondary Plan area, and the evolution of adjacent neighbourhoods into a more urban place.

A number of common themes were heard throughout Phase 2 engagement, and often expressed as a condition for future growth and development:

- Future development must not compromise livability, safety or access to infrastructure and community services such as schools, healthcare and transit.
- Expand the tree canopy and access to more green space to maintain livability, allow for natural drainage to mitigate flooding, and reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Address traffic congestion as the community continues to grow.
- Development should not worsen the existing wind tunnel effect on Yonge Street and shadow impacts from tall buildings.

Feedback by topic is summarized below, with more details provided in Section 3 of the Phase 2 Engagement Summary.

### *Boundary Expansion*

- If the Secondary Plan area boundary is expanded, the most important considerations identified by the community are traffic impacts, tree canopy protection, providing better access to parks, managing sun/shadow impacts. This feedback was repeated, and often stated as a condition of growth and development, in relation to other elements of the EPO.



### *Buildings*

- Support exists for tall buildings along Yonge Street, but concerns remain about wind, shadow, and traffic impacts. Concerns were also raised about whether future development approvals will exceed permitted heights.
- Introducing mid-rise buildings in new areas received a mixed response, with about two-thirds of the community disagreeing with the proposal to permit mid-rise buildings along Empress Avenue and Willowdale Avenue, but nearly half agreeing with mid-rise buildings on Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road.
- Maintaining low-rise neighbourhoods between Doris Avenue and Willowdale Avenue was favored by about two thirds of the community, while a third argued preserving low-rise areas limits housing potential.



### *Housing*

- There is strong demand for diverse housing types, including affordable, supportive, Indigenous, and co-op housing.
- Mid-rise buildings are seen as a way to increase housing density and diversity while maintaining neighbourhood character.



### *Retail*

- There is demand for more diverse retail (beyond restaurants).
- Retail expansion beyond Yonge Street is supported, with half the community supporting retail on Willowdale and three quarters supporting retail along Sheppard and Finch Avenues.



### *Inclusive Economic Development*

- Support for small businesses is needed, and there is a desire for co-working spaces that provide an alternative to traditional office towers.
- Improving the 'look and feel', including design, cleanliness and safety of North York Centre was identified as a priority for the area an attractive place to work or own a business.



### *Infrastructure and Services*

- The community is concerned about overburdened schools, parks, and health services.
- There is strong support for integrated community hubs and infrastructure investment to match.



### *Arts and Culture*

- The community values existing arts and cultural opportunities, but many want more inclusive, decentralized programming.
- Support for public art, local artist involvement, and improved cultural venues



### *Public Realm*

- Public realm priorities include greening, seating, safety, and Indigenous recognition.



### *Parks and Environment*

- Passive and ecological uses were most desired for new parks, although there is demand for recreational facilities.
- Requests for larger parks, community gardens, Indigenous ceremonial spaces, and better amenities (e.g., benches, washrooms) were common.





## *Mobility*

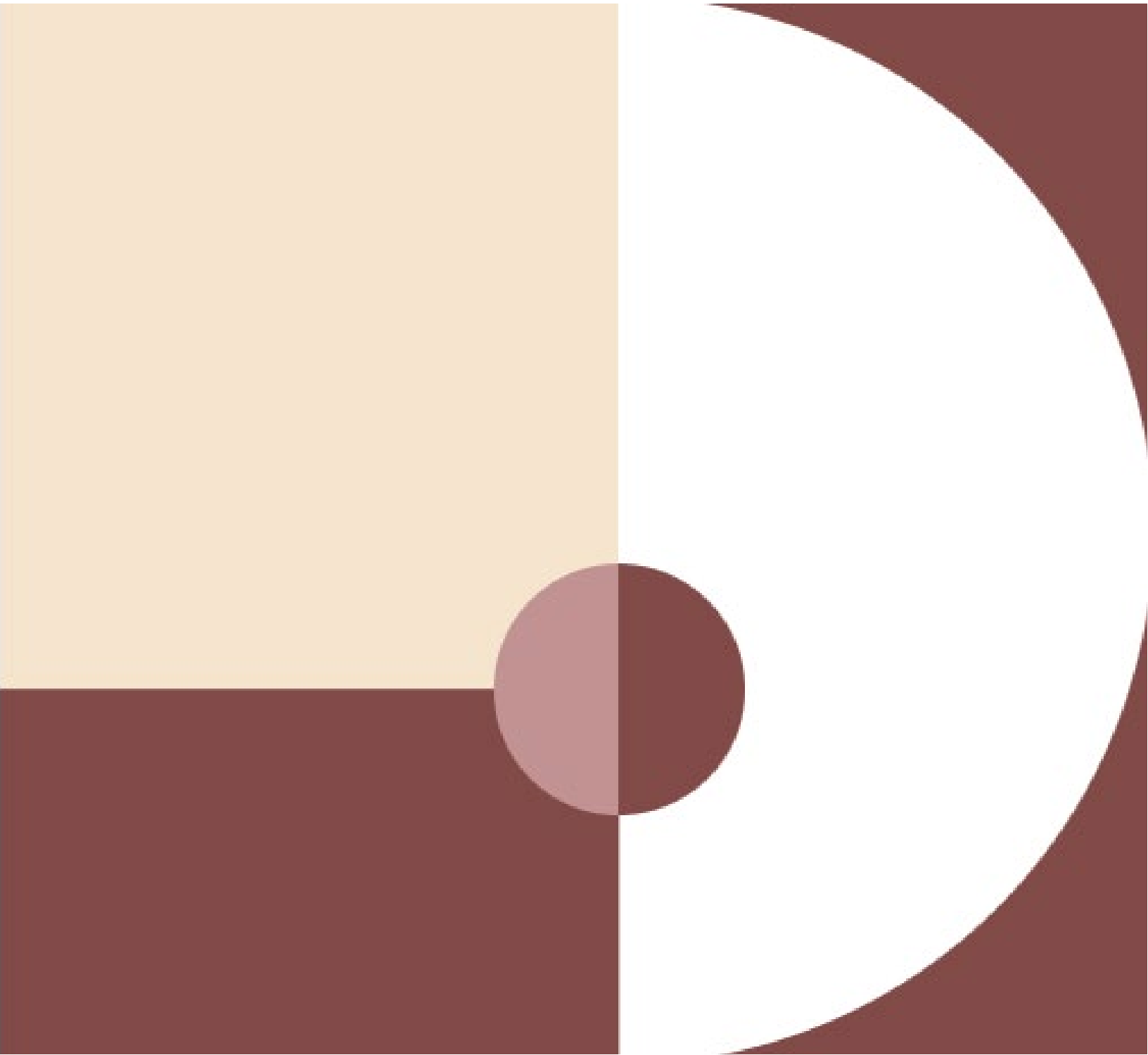
- Many community members emphasized the importance of pedestrian safety, better crossings, and improved cycling infrastructure. However, there were mixed views on bike lanes, with many people supporting safer routes but concerned about traffic impacts.
- Parking shortages and enforcement were major concerns.



## **Lessons Learned**

A large amount of work was completed in Phase 2, including the development of the alternative options, a detailed evaluation and the identification of an EPO that was described and illustrated through a series of maps. Although the project team made an effort to reduce the volume of information presented to the community and use simple and accessible language, concerns were raised by some members of the community about the amount and complexity of the information being shared. The online survey and community engagement toolkit were also useful tools for engaging the community in meaningful dialogue on various topics, but were too long and complicated for some community members. The project team will continue to look for ways to simplify materials brought forward to the community in the next phase of work.

# 0.1 Introduction



# 01. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 North York at the Centre

The City of Toronto is undertaking a review of the North York Centre Secondary Plan to refresh the vision for the Centre and develop new policy directions to shape the area as an inclusive, resilient, and complete community.

The project, known as “North York at the Centre”, includes engagement with the community and interested parties to identify aspirations, determine priorities, and recommend updates to the planning policies that guide growth and investment in the area. North York at the Centre will address the environment, parks and open spaces, climate change mitigation and adaptation, land use, housing, economic development, community services and facilities, mobility, public realm, built form and servicing.



Figure 1-1 - Study Area Map

## What is a Secondary Plan?

The City of Toronto Official Plan provides a city-wide framework for guiding growth and development. Secondary Plans provide more detailed land use designations and policy directions to fit local contexts in areas where major physical change is expected or desired. Secondary Plans comprise policies and maps that are adopted into the Official Plan to guide growth and development.

## Why Update the Secondary Plan?

The existing North York Centre Secondary Plan was adopted in 1997 and has positively shaped growth in the Centre for over two decades, providing direction on matters such as land use, built form, mobility, the public realm, parks, and community services and facilities. A review is needed now to examine current conditions and trends, and to set the stage for a policy refresh to guide growth in the Centre over the coming decades. Alongside the recently completed plans for Downtown (TOcore) and Midtown (Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan), and the ongoing Our Scarborough Centre study, North York at the Centre will contribute to an updated and more contemporary policy framework for the City's *Centres* to guide growth and development over the long-term.

## Project Phases

North York at the Centre is being completed in three phases (Phase 1 Background Review, Phase 2 Options and Directions, and Phase 3 Implementation Strategy and Secondary Plan Update), with engagement events and activities held in each phase to inform the project components.



Figure 1-2 - North York at the Centre Project Phases

## 1.2 Community Engagement

### Phase 1 Vision and Guiding Principles

Phase 1 engagement for North York at the Centre was focused on raising project awareness, understanding existing conditions, and developing a visioning framework to inform the work that would come in Phase 2. The project team reached out to the North York Centre community through a Public Visioning Workshop in November 2023 that was attended by over 150 participants. Alongside the Workshop, an online community mapping exercise resulted in 65 place-based comments, and a visioning survey received 47 responses to help inform the Visioning Framework. A Local Advisory Committee (LAC) was also formed in October 2023, including members representing various community groups and interested parties in North York Centre. The project team held eight community pop-up events to reach more people in the community between November 2023 and September 2024.

A detailed Phase 1 Engagement Summary is available at [toronto.ca/nycentre](https://toronto.ca/nycentre).



*Phase 1 Visioning Workshop (November 2023)*

### Phase 2 Options and Directions

Phase 2 engagement for North York at the Centre took place between January and May 2025, and focused on:

- sharing the outcome of Phase 1, including the vision and guiding principles;
- presenting the work completed in Phase 2 on developing and evaluating options; and,
- encouraging discussion and feedback on an Emerging Preferred Option (EPO) to help inform refinements for a Preferred Option.

The types of engagement used to generate feedback on the options evaluation and Emerging Preferred Option included Public Consultation Centres (PCCs), Community Workshops hosted by members of the Local Advisory Committee, an online survey, and meetings with the Local Indigenous Community and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Visit [toronto.ca/nycentre](http://toronto.ca/nycentre) to view the Phase 2 Public Consultation Centre materials, including a video and presentation boards on the options evaluation and Emerging Preferred Option. A complete Phase 2 Engagement Summary is provided in this report.

## **Phase 2 Options Development and Evaluation**

In Phase 2, the study team developed and evaluated different options for how North York Centre can grow in a way that reflects the vision and guiding principles that were identified in consultation with the community in Phase 1.

Three options (Business As Usual (BAU), Alternative 1 and Alternative 2) allowed the team to consider different boundaries, land uses, building heights and types, parks and open space systems, and public realm and mobility networks for the Centre. BAU was included as a “do nothing” scenario for comparative purposes only and it reflects current Secondary Plan policies for North York Centre that were adopted in 1997, which are no longer consistent with provincial policy and require updating. Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 explored different approaches to grow a complete community, reinforce the Centre as a vibrant hub for work, arts and culture, green the Centre, build connectivity and design places for people.

The Emerging Preferred Option (EPO) was identified based on the evaluation of options. In addition to proposed plans for land use, building types and heights, parks and open space, public realm, and mobility, the EPO provides recommended policy directions addressing topics such as community services and facilities, inclusive economic development, arts and culture, action on climate change and cultural heritage.

The EPO is illustrated in Figure 1-3 and proposes to:

- Expand the boundary east to Willowdale Avenue to facilitate housing diversity, gradual height transition and better east-west connectivity.
- Green the public realm and better connect the parks and open space network by creating new linear “parkways” along Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road and a signature trail along Wilket Creek.
- Introduce greater flexibility for both new residential and non-residential uses, protecting and growing the Centre’s role as an employment hub.
- Celebrate and cultivate the range and diversity of the arts, cultural, retail, civic and institutional uses that draw people to North York Centre from across the city.
- Identify additional or improved community services and facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.



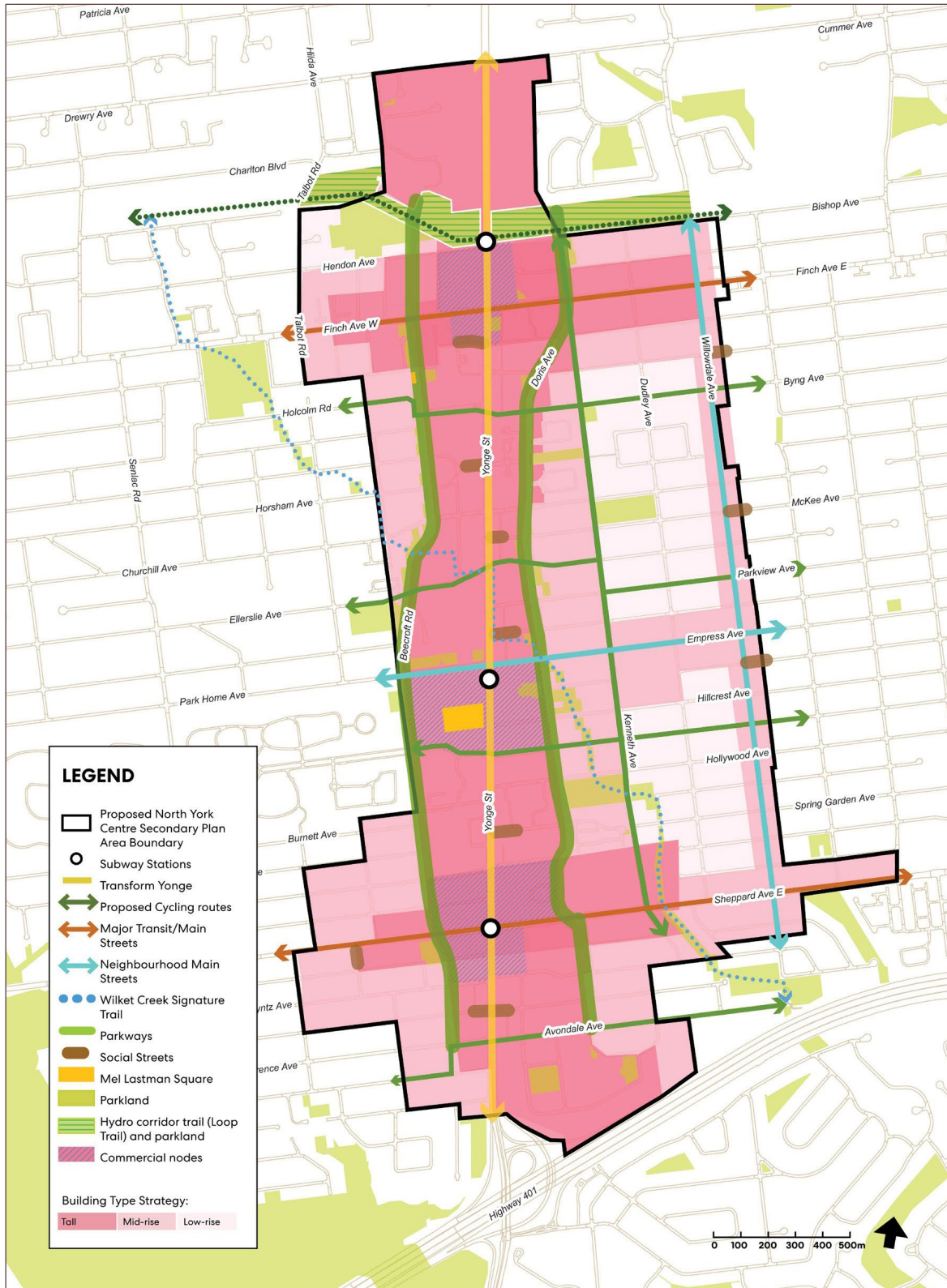


Figure 1-3 – Emerging Preferred Option

## 1.3 Report Organization

Including the preceding Introduction, the Phase 2 Engagement Summary includes four sections:

- Section 1 presents the background, project phases, and community engagement overview.
- Section 2 presents the communication methods and engagement activities completed during Phase 2.
- Section 3 summarizes what was heard, including common themes and according to the topic areas that make up the EPO.
- Section 4 provides lessons learned from Phase 1 and 2 engagement activities.



## 0.2 Phase 2 Engagement



## 02. PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

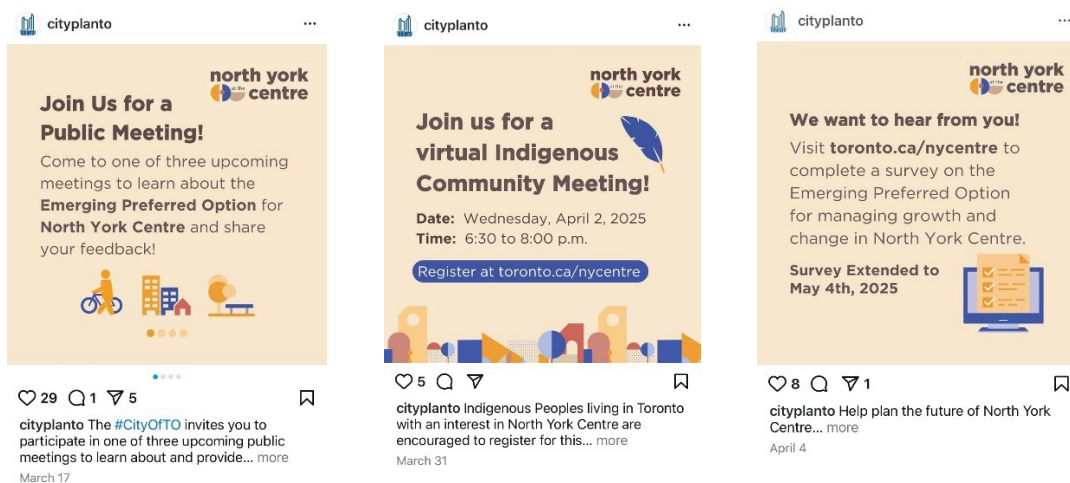
Phase 2 engagement took place from January to May 2025 and involved an array of communication methods, online tools and virtual and in-person events.

### 2.1 Communications

Communications methods included:

- A dedicated project web page at [toronto.ca/nycentre](https://toronto.ca/nycentre);
- Three e-updates distributed to 344 people from [nycentre@toronto.ca](mailto:nycentre@toronto.ca);
- Six social media posts by CityPlanTO on Instagram and X, plus multiple Instagram 'stories';
- A Notice of Public Meeting mailed to 48,094 households and businesses;
- Councillor's e-newsletter;
- Postcards distributed at Community Pop-ups; and
- Project update letters sent to two First Nations.

Social media posts, e-updates and web page updates included promotions for the community pop-ups, Public Consultation Centres (PCCs) and online survey, as well as project updates and links to newly released reports and meeting materials.



*Phase 2 social media posts*

### 2.2 Activities and Events

In-person and virtual activities and events were held during Phase 2 including Indigenous engagement meetings, Local Advisory Committee meetings, Community Workshops hosted by LAC members using a Community Engagement Toolkit, Public Consultation Centres, an online survey, community pop-ups and other events.

## Indigenous Engagement

North York at the Centre represents an opportunity to support the implementation of the City of Toronto's 2022-2032 Reconciliation Action Plan. The project team includes an Indigenous facilitator (SpruceLab) that leads and facilitates all outreach to First Nations and the local Indigenous community. The purpose of engaging with First Nations and the local Indigenous community is to help build stronger relationships. Ultimately, the goal is to include Indigenous voices in the development of the project. This approach will assist the project team to be informed, inspired and influenced by these contributions, through the sharing of Indigenous Knowledge and a better understanding of these priorities.

Although this report summarizes Phase 2 engagement, an overview Phase 1 Indigenous engagement is also included since it was still underway when the Phase 1 Engagement Summary was published in April 2025.

### *Phase 1*

The project team met with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC), Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and the Six Nations of the Grand River (SNGR) from January to February 2024 to introduce the project and receive preliminary feedback on the project approach and key issues.

Following the issuance of the Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report, the project team hosted a Local Indigenous Organization Workshop in April 2024 and a Local Indigenous Community Meeting in May 2024 where the community was engaged for input on the vision and guiding principles.

Over 25 organizations were invited to join the Local Indigenous Organization Workshop via e-mail and follow-up telephone call. The workshop was attended by two participants and was graciously opened and closed by Knowledge Holder Luana Harper-Shirt of the Nehiyaw Iskewew in a Traditional Way.

The Community Meeting was advertised on Facebook and participants registered via EventBrite. The meeting was graciously opened and closed by Elder Garry Sault of the MCFN and a total of 11 participants attended. Gifts were issued by the City to all attendees following the meeting.

The feedback received during these meetings is summarized in Appendix 1 and influenced the development of the vision and guiding principles as well as the criteria used to evaluate the alternative options.

## *Phase 2*

Phase 2 engagement involved outreach and meetings with First Nations, Indigenous organizations and the local Indigenous community. The feedback that was received has been incorporated into Section 3 of this report.

In March 2025, a project update communication was delivered to MCFN and SNGR. MCFN expressed an interest in a meeting to learn more about the project and a meeting was held virtually on April 7, 2025. MCFN will continue to be engaged as project materials are released in Phase 2. Despite follow-up, no response was received from SNGR as of the date of issuance of this report.

The project team made a presentation to TASSC on March 26, 2025. The purpose of the meeting was to present the vision and guiding principles as well as the alternative options, evaluation and EPO for discussion and feedback. A virtual meeting was held for the local Indigenous community on April 2, 2025 and was attended by 26 participants. As was done during Phase 1, the meeting was advertised on Facebook and participants registered via EventBrite. The meeting was graciously opened and closed by Elder Jimmy Dick and gifts were issued by the City to all attendees following the meeting.

### **Local Advisory Committee**

The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) was established in Fall 2023 through a public call for community members, which was issued through the City's social media accounts, the local councillor's e-newsletter, a mailed meeting notice, and by outreach to local organizations and agencies that are active in the North York Centre community. The LAC is comprised of 23 members representing various local organizations as well as interested members of the community.

The role of the LAC is to review and provide feedback on project materials before they are presented to the broader public. LAC members may also share information about the project through their networks. Feedback received from the LAC has helped the project team develop materials and deliverables that are clear and responsive to the community's aspirations and priorities.

Since the issuance of the Phase 1 Engagement Summary, which included feedback from LAC Meeting #1, a total of three meetings were held with the LAC.

### *Meeting #2 – Phase 1*

To conclude Phase 1 engagement, the second LAC meeting was held virtually on April 23, 2024, with 20 members in attendance. The meeting included a project update and a summary of key insights gathered during Phase 1 engagement. LAC members were introduced to the draft vision framework and evaluation criteria and participated in a facilitated discussion using an interactive whiteboard.

### ***Meeting #3 – Phase 2***

LAC Meeting #3 was held on January 28, 2025 at the North York Central Library with nine LAC members in attendance. The meeting involved a recap of the vision and guiding principles, which were developed based on feedback through Phase 1 engagement and refined based on technical studies. During LAC Meeting #3, the project team also provided guidance to assist LAC members with planning workshops of their own with their communities and organizations in March 2025 using a Community Engagement Toolkit to be distributed at the next LAC meeting.

### ***Meeting #4 – Phase 2***

The fourth LAC meeting took place on February 26, 2025, at the North York Central Library, with 10 LAC members in attendance. During the meeting, the project team presented an overview of the options for North York Centre and how each option was evaluated by the project team against the guiding principles. This options overview included Business As Usual (BAU), Alternative 1, Alternative 2 and the Emerging Preferred Option (EPO).

LAC members also had the opportunity to review and provide feedback on a Community Engagement Toolkit, including its materials and activities. The Community Engagement Toolkit provided instructions and activities so that members of the LAC could organize and facilitate their own workshop with a group. The Toolkit, as well as an accompanying project Primer, was provided in both hard copy and electronic formats. The Toolkit included a map and description of the EPO and the questions were structured around the following topics: Housing and Building Types; Secondary Plan Area; Retail, Employment, Arts and Culture; Parks, Open Space and Public Realm; and Mobility.

Feedback from the LAC resulted in revisions to the Toolkit before it was formally published.

### **Community Workshops**

Using the Community Engagement Toolkit, six Community Workshops were hosted by LAC members, including with the Yonge Corridor Condominium Association, Yonge North BIA, West Lansing Homeowners Association, Willowdale Central Ratepayers Association, Edithvale-Yonge Community Association, Cycle Toronto. A total of seven Toolkits (one for each workshop plus one from a private resident) were returned to the project team, with feedback from an aggregate of 125 people.

### **Public Consultation Centres**

Three in-person PCCs were held at flexible times across the study area and attended by over 350 participants. The meetings were held on:

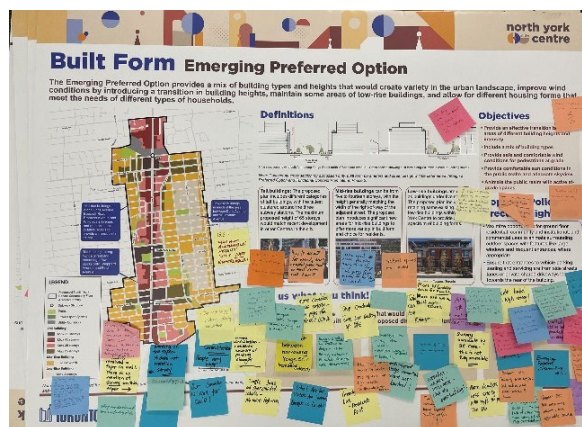
- Monday March 24, 2025 at Lansing United Church from 3:00 to 8:00 PM
- Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at Drewry Secondary School from 6:30 to 9:00 PM
- Saturday, March 29, 2025 at North York Central Library from 12:00 to 4:30 PM

The purpose of the PCCs was to provide information about the project, progress thus far and how to get involved as well as to share the options and evaluation and engage the community in discussion to collect feedback on the EPO.



*Public Consultation Centres (March 2025)*

Each PCC was structured as a drop-in meeting and a supervised children’s activity table was made available. Following sign-in and the offer of an optional comment sheet, participants were invited to review presentation boards that were organized around topic-based stations where project team members were available to answer questions and discuss the information being shared. Tables and chairs were provided at each station to provide respite and a place for discussion. Input was provided through the comment sheets and discussion with the project team, as well as through sticky notes that were completed and attached to the presentation boards. A video presentation was aired at scheduled times that were advertised in the meeting notice. The video presentation provided an explanation and overview of the PCC materials and reminded participants how to provide feedback and continue to be involved in the project. The PCC boards and video presentation can be viewed online at [toronto.ca/nycentre](https://toronto.ca/nycentre) under ‘Meetings and Events’. A total of 16 comment sheets and 331 comments on sticky notes were collected during the PCCs.



*Example of Information Panel*



## **Emerging Preferred Option Online Survey**

A detailed EPO Social Pinpoint Survey was promoted through various communication methods and linked on the project web page from March 24, 2025 to May 4, 2025, during which time 1,086 surveys were completed. The survey questions followed the same structure and format as the Community Engagement Toolkit questions and feedback has been aggregated to inform the summary of what was heard provided in Section 3 of this report.

## **Community Pop-ups and Other Events**

The project team continued to maintain a presence within the community during Phase 2 and held two community pop-ups to promote the project, raise awareness of the upcoming PCCs and the EPO online survey, and encourage people to sign-up for e-updates. The community pop-ups were held during:

- Willowdale Celebrates Lunar New Year Event at the North York City Centre on February 8, 2025; and
- Willowdale Nowruz Celebration at the North York Civic Centre on March 1, 2025.

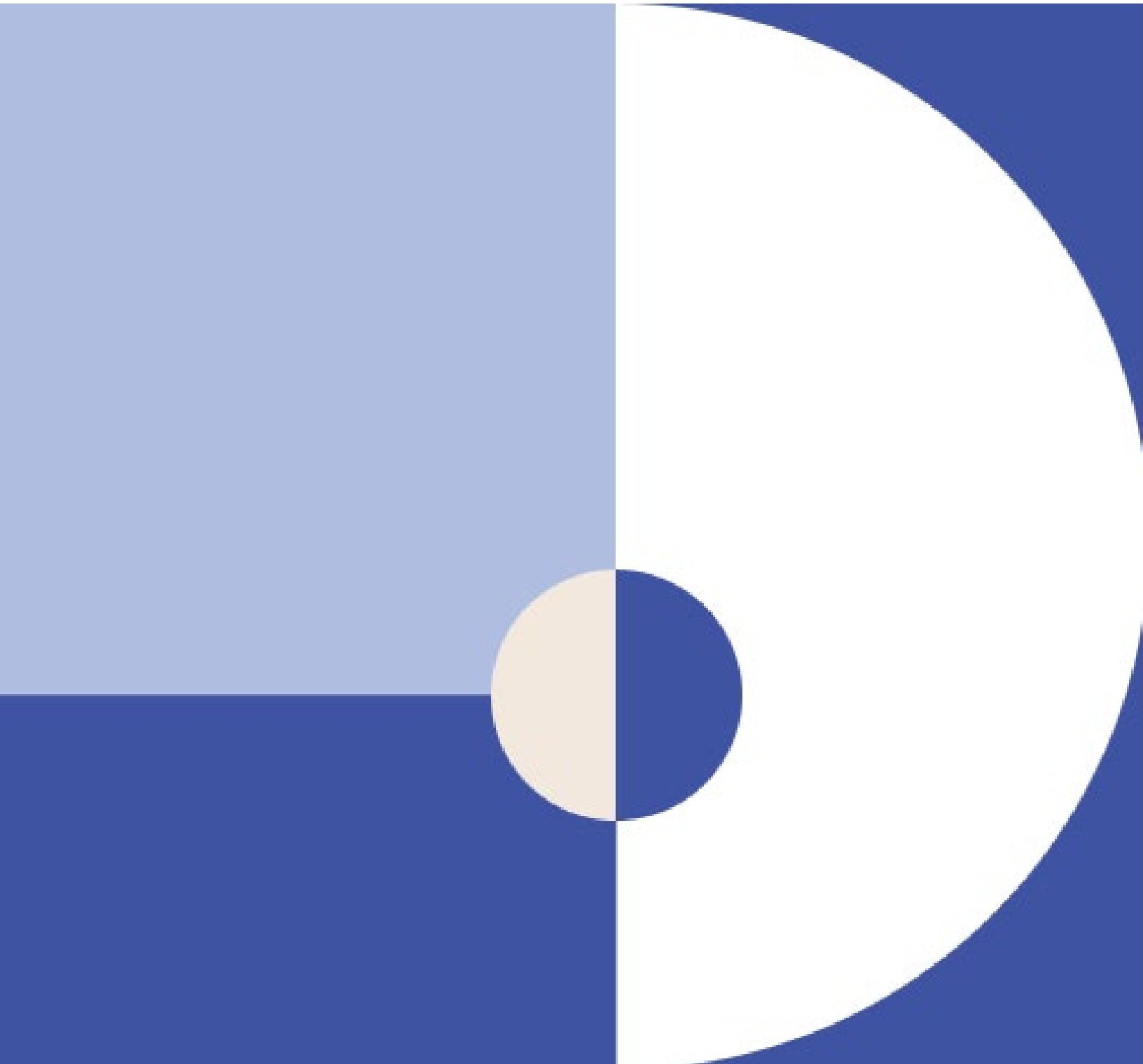
Many members of the public were engaged in conversation and/or took away project postcards.

Following the formal Phase 2 Community Engagement Series, project team members also attended three Councillor-led evening Town Halls at the:

- Spring Garden Baptist Church on April 15, 2025;
- Lansing United Church on April 29, 2025; and,
- Newtonbrook Secondary School on May 5, 2025.

During the Town Halls, a project team representative provided a presentation on the Emerging Preferred Option and participated in a Question-and-Answer period with the community.

## 0.3 What We Heard





## 03. WHAT WE HEARD

The following Section provides an overview of the feedback received on buildings, land use, public realm, parks and environment, and mobility. Unless otherwise indicated, the summary provided in this section combines feedback received through the online survey, Community Engagement Toolkits, comment sheets, meetings with First Nations and the local Indigenous community, responses provided in writing at the Public Consultation Centres (PCCs) and heard by the project team through discussion with the community. Many of these common themes were expressed as key needs and conditions of growth and development in North York Centre. Throughout this Section, survey responses are presented as percentages where only one option could be selected, and a total number of responses where multiple options could be selected.

### 3.1 Boundary Expansion

The Emerging Preferred Option (EPO) involves an expansion of the boundary of the North York Centre Secondary Plan, most notably eastward to include Willowdale Avenue. Survey respondents were asked to identify the most important considerations that should be addressed with the proposed expansion of the boundary of the Secondary Plan. As shown in Figure 3-1, the most important factors identified include traffic impacts, tree canopy protection, providing better access to parks, and sun/shadow impacts. This feedback was repeated, and often stated as a condition of growth and development, in relation to other elements of the EPO.

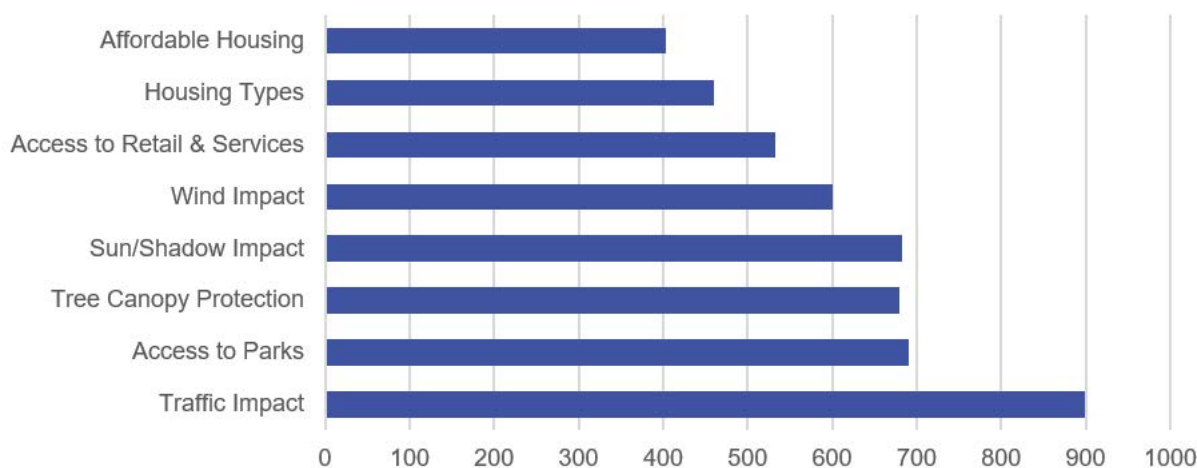


Figure 3-1: Most important considerations if the Secondary Plan area is expanded

## 3.2 Buildings

### Tall Buildings

Survey respondents were asked if they agree with focusing tall buildings on Yonge Street and extending a few blocks onto Sheppard Avenue and Finch Avenue. During the PCC, respondents were asked to tell us what they like, dislike or would change about the proposed housing and building types.

Many survey respondents supported focusing tall buildings along Yonge Street near transit, with many preferring height limits of 25–35 storeys. Common themes and/or concerns were focused on issues like traffic, wind or sun/shadow impacts. Concerns were also expressed about the potential for future development approvals to exceed the heights identified in the updated Secondary Plan, as has happened in the past. Many respondents also emphasized the need for well-designed buildings that enhance the visual character of the area. The focus was particularly on the building podiums, with requests for more thoughtful and engaging architectural design.

### Mid-Rise Buildings

Many public meeting attendees expressed support for mid-rise buildings and acknowledged the role mid-rise buildings play in providing a more gradual transition from low-rise neighbourhoods to tall buildings along Yonge Street. Survey respondents were also asked if they agree with introducing mid-rise buildings along Beecroft Road, Doris Avenue, Empress Avenue and Willowdale Avenue. As illustrated in Figure 3-2, responses were split nearly evenly with respect to Doris Avenue and Beecroft Avenue, which are the two north-south service roads that run parallel to Yonge Street. Although concerns were raised relating to transition from tall to mid-rise and low-rise buildings, there was support expressed for mid-rise buildings as a more accessible form of housing for families, youth, and new Canadians. In the case of Empress Avenue and Willowdale Avenue, a greater proportion of survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with mid-rise buildings, citing a disruption to the existing residential character, concerns about potential traffic issues, and lack of space.

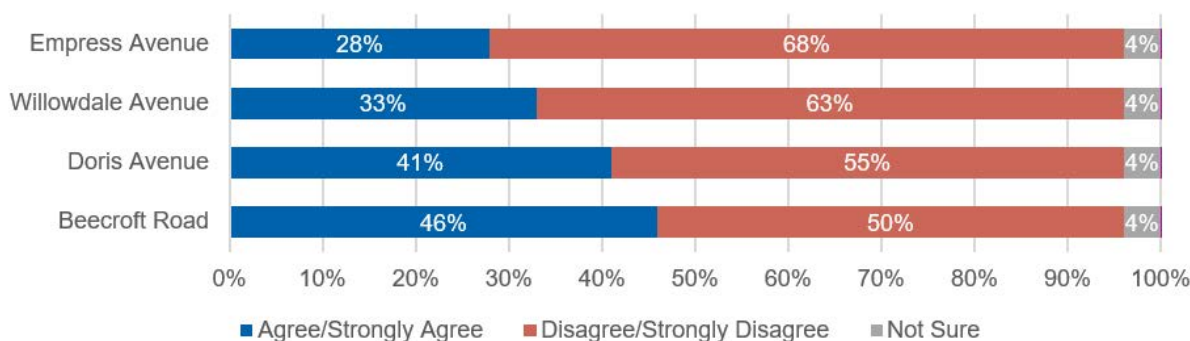


Figure 3-2: Do you agree with introducing mid-rise buildings along Empress Avenue, Willowdale Avenue, Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road

## Low-rise Buildings

Survey respondents were asked if they agree with maintaining low-rise buildings between Doris Avenue and Willowdale Avenue. There was some agreement with the maintenance of low-rise buildings with a total of 61% of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed. Many emphasized the importance of maintaining low-rise development to preserve neighborhood character, limit congestion, and support family-friendly housing. A third of respondents (34%) argued that restricting development in this transit-accessible area is a poor use of land and undermines efforts to address the housing crisis. Comments received at the public meetings reflected a similar diversity of perspectives on whether low-rise areas should be maintained or redeveloped.

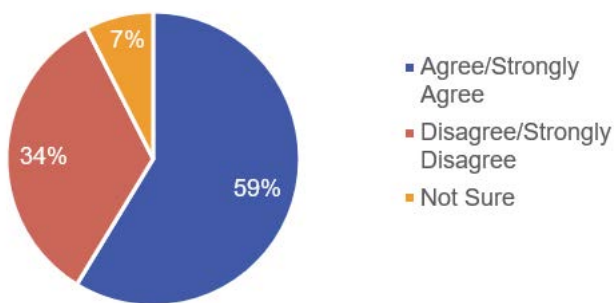


Figure 3-3: Do you agree with maintaining low-rise between Doris Avenue and Willowdale Avenue?

## 3.3 Land Use

### Housing

A clear need was expressed for more diverse housing types, including mid-rise buildings, townhouses, supportive housing, affordable housing, public, social, and co-op options. This reflects a desire for varied housing that caters to different income levels and households. There is an express desire for Indigenous housing that is owned and operated by Indigenous non-profit organizations, and some comments were received about achieving affordable housing for Indigenous people through inclusionary zoning and/or through development on City-owned sites.

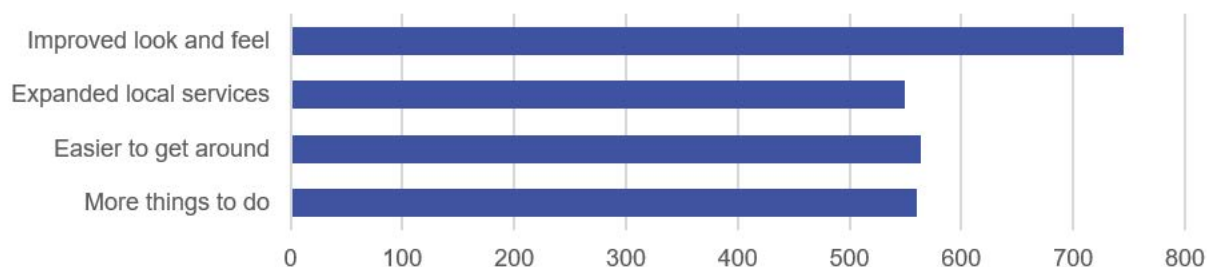
Mid-rise buildings were supported by many as a way to increase housing density and diversity while maintaining neighborhood character. These building types were seen as essential for creating opportunities for intergenerational households and residents seeking to transition within the neighbourhood, such as aging adults.

## Inclusive Economic Development

When asked what could make North York Centre a more attractive place to work or own a business, many survey respondents emphasized the need for a more diverse, accessible, and vibrant commercial environment. Some suggestions included:

- Retail diversity: Calls for less repetition and more essential or varied offerings such as bookstores, cafes, second-hand bookstores, hardware, and family-focused restaurants.
- Support for small businesses: Requests for lower rents, tax incentives, and grants to encourage independent businesses over large chains.
- Co-working and flexible workspaces: Some respondents proposed shared office spaces and community hubs as alternatives to traditional office towers.
- Design and accessibility: Respondents noted the sterile design of retail in high-rise podiums, calling for better integration, street activation, underground parking, and more walkable storefronts.
- Cleanliness and safety: Many linked a cleaner, safer streetscape to business success.

These comments were echoed in another survey response, where “improved look and feel” was the highest rated improvement, as illustrated in Figure 3-4.

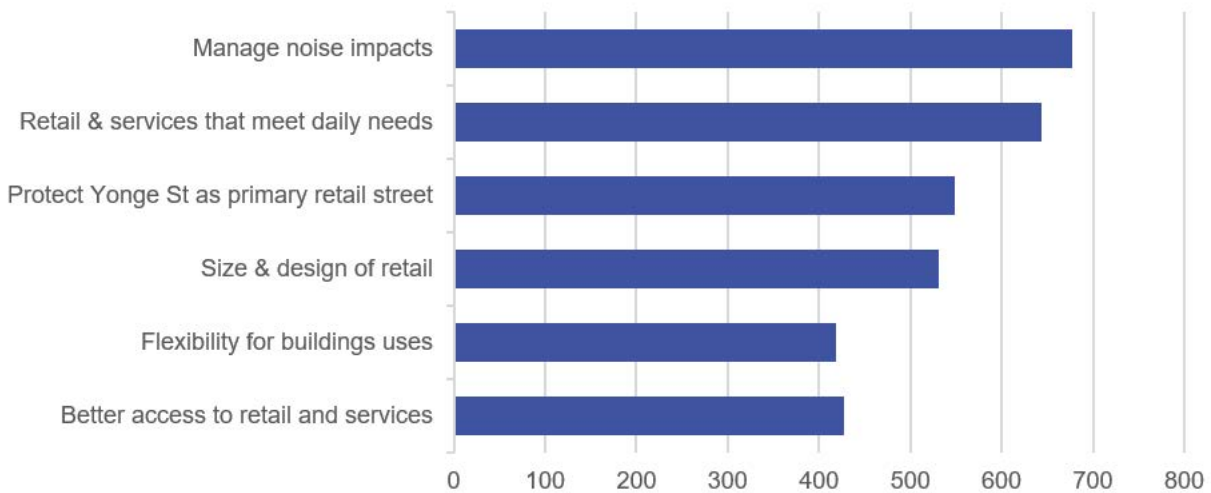


*Figure 3-4: What do you think could make North York Centre a more attractive place to work or own a business?*

Beyond the survey, limited comments from meeting participants about economic development were focused on protecting and maintaining a balance of jobs in the Center alongside residential growth.

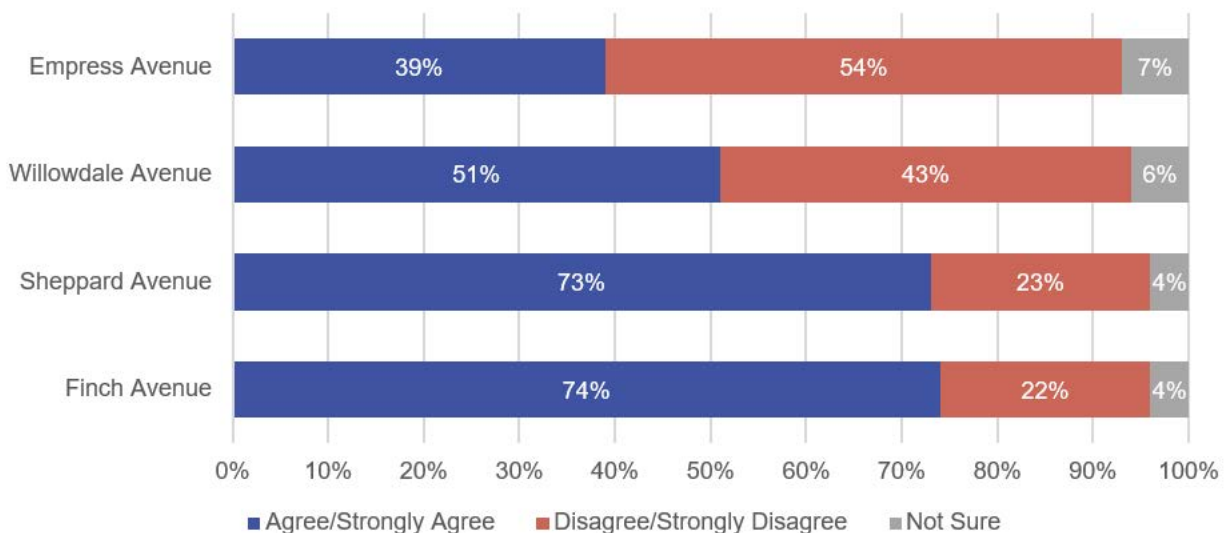
## Retail

Survey respondents were asked to identify key considerations for retail and services in North York Centre. As illustrated in Figure 3-5, the most popular consideration was the management of traffic and parking impacts, which is a very common theme that was heard throughout Phase 2 engagement. Managing noise impacts and focusing on retail and services that meet daily needs, such as small food stores, corner stores, cafes and personal services, were also common responses. In fact, there was strong support for greater diversity in retail and commercial spaces, such as cafes or second-hand bookstores, and expanding retail to reflect diverse cultures and cuisines.



*Figure 3-5: If retail and services are required, encouraged or permitted what are the key considerations that need to be addressed?*

There was also support for spreading commercial activity to areas beyond Yonge Street, as illustrated in Figure 3-6. Survey respondents were generally split when asked if retail and services should be expanded along Willowdale Avenue and Empress Avenue, however, there was strong agreement with the expansion of these uses along Sheppard Avenue and Finch Avenue. Many expressed the opinion that Yonge Street is too homogenous in terms of commercial offerings, with a call for more variety. Walkability, access to everyday essentials, and preserving neighborhood character were also repeatedly mentioned and noted as central to a healthy, vibrant, and livable community.



*Figure 3-6: Do you agree with retail and services being introduced or expanded along these streets?*

Infrastructure and Community Services and Facilities

The community expressed very clearly that improvements to community services and facilities need to be provided alongside growth in North York Centre. This need for improving the provision of community services and facilities was often presented as a condition of increased density around subway stations and the introduction of mid-rise buildings between Doris Avenue and Willowdale Avenue. There were also concerns about the cost to build water and transportation infrastructure in a manner that keeps pace with the rate of growth and development.

Numerous participants pointed out that many local schools, parks, and health services are already at or beyond capacity. Specific areas such as Yonge and Sheppard and Yonge and Finch were flagged as examples of where density has already outpaced community support infrastructure. Strong support was expressed for integrated services or hubs, such as schools, daycares, health clinics, and recreation facilities. Overall, however, the increase in population and density without investment in infrastructure and services was seen as unsustainable and a threat to quality of life.

Arts and Culture

Survey respondents were asked if they have enough opportunities to participate in or discover culture in North York Centre, and 87% believed they had some or many opportunities to experience culture. When considering culture, survey respondents were also asked to identify North York Centre’s strengths and areas of improvement. As illustrated in Figure 3-7, strengths included events and opportunities to gather and venues for cultural events, and the latter was also identified as an area for improvement (Figure 3-8).

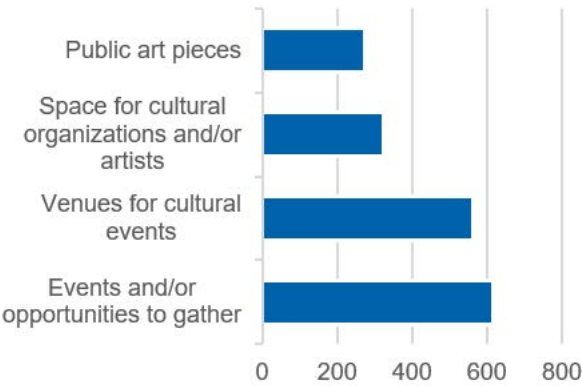


Figure 3-7: Considering culture, what are North York Centre’s strengths?

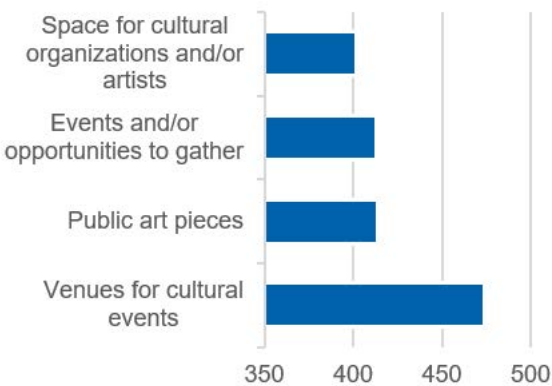


Figure 3-8 Considering culture, what areas could North York Centre improve in?

Some survey respondents and meeting participants praised North York Centre’s cultural offerings and urged preservation of the current balance, while others expressed a feeling of exclusion due to cost, lack of information, or a sense that programs cater to specific groups. In the case of public art, support was expressed for more public art installations, pop-up performances, and neighbourhood-based cultural expressions. There were some calls for cultural programming to be:

- Decentralized, not only hosted at Mel Lastman Square;
- Reflective of local diversity, rather than focused on large-format or ethnic-specific events only; and
- Connected to public realm improvements like shaded seating, safe pedestrian zones, and creative use of public space.

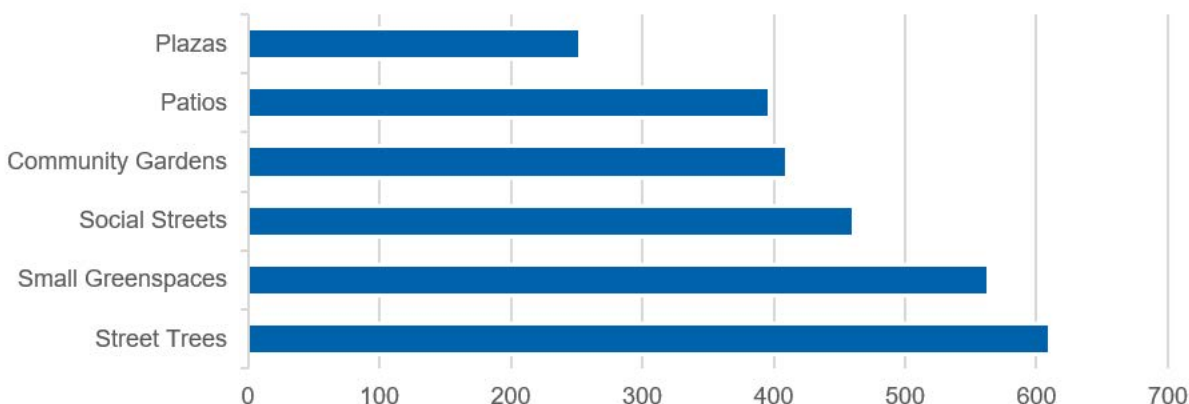
Many respondents praised the Meridian Arts Centre and Mel Lastman Square but noted that both venues are underutilized. Some suggestions included:

- Hosting bigger-name performances and more diverse programming;
- Increasing promotion and accessibility of events;
- Adding smaller venues for live music, theatre, and independent film; and
- Ensuring spaces like George Weston Recital Hall are used year-round.

Participants called for greater inclusion of local artists, students, and cultural communities—especially Korean, Persian, Chinese, and Indigenous groups—in arts planning. They also recommended spotlighting emerging talent, building mentorships, and supporting community-led initiatives. Some also proposed dedicated arts hubs, collaborative spaces, and outreach to underrepresented populations.

### 3.4 Public Realm

Survey respondents were asked to identify improvements to outdoor spaces and the public realm aside from parks. As illustrated in Figure 3-9, the most popular public realm improvement was more street trees and planting, followed by small greenspaces, community gardens and low-traffic streets that can be closed for special events. The desire for a greater tree canopy and green spaces for access to nature is a common theme that was expressed as a condition for growth throughout Phase 2 engagement. Public washrooms, water fountains, and benches were also identified to enhance the comfort and functionality of outdoor spaces. The community also expressed a desire for improved maintenance of these amenities and safety, such as improved lighting, to ensure they remain safe, usable and welcoming year-round.

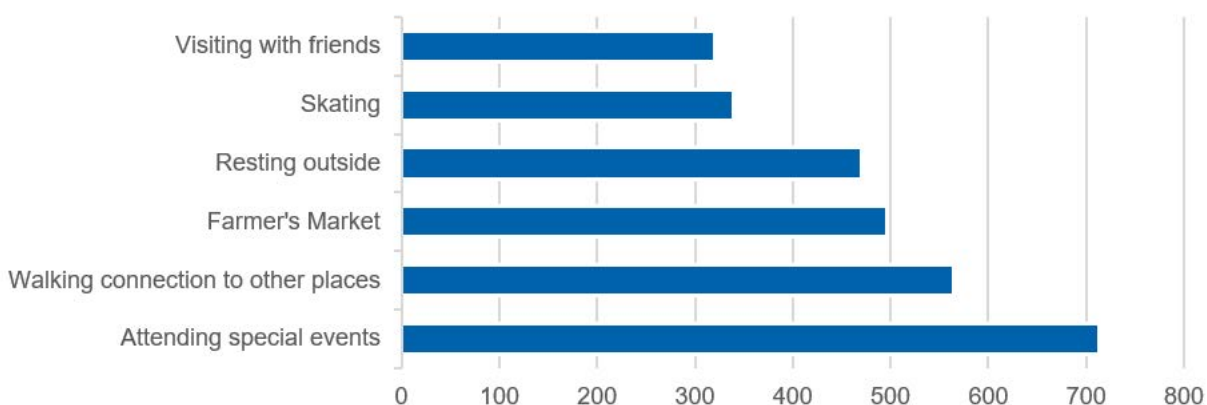


*Figure 3-9: What improvements to outdoor spaces and the public realm would you like to see more of in North York Centre, aside from parks?*

There was also a desire for Indigenous naming, wayfinding, place keeping and recognizing Indigenous heritage within the public realm. This could be achieved through engagement of local Indigenous artists for pieces in public spaces, such as in TTC stations, and through stewardship of native plants and medicines in dedicated gardens.

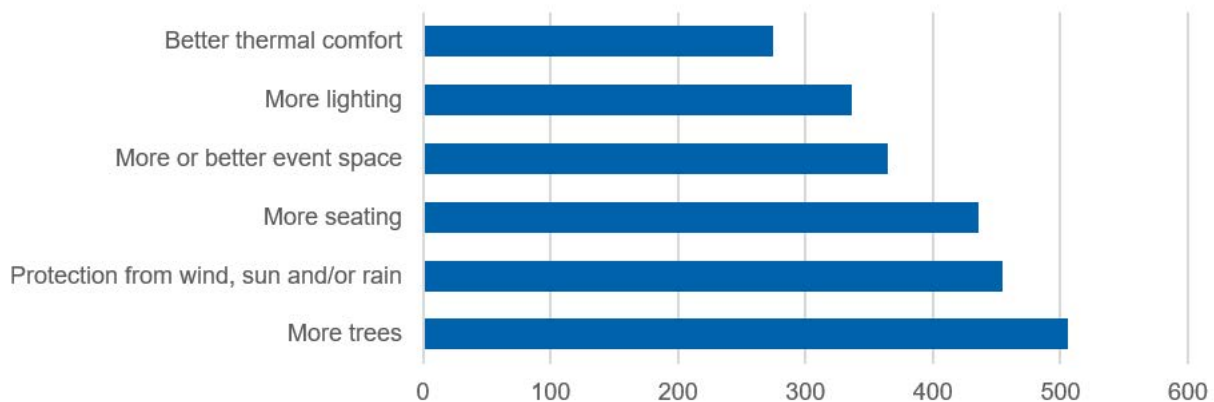
### Mel Lastman Square

Recognizing its significance as a central civic space for gathering and special events, survey respondents were asked about how they currently use and how they would improve Mel Lastman Square. As illustrated in Figure 3-10, the most common use of Mel Lastman Square is for special events, followed by walking connection to other places and the Farmer's Market. The highest rated improvement to Mel Lastman Square is better maintenance, followed by more trees, better protection from wind, sun and/or rain and more seating (Figure 3-11).



*Figure 3-10: How do you use Mel Lastman Square today?*





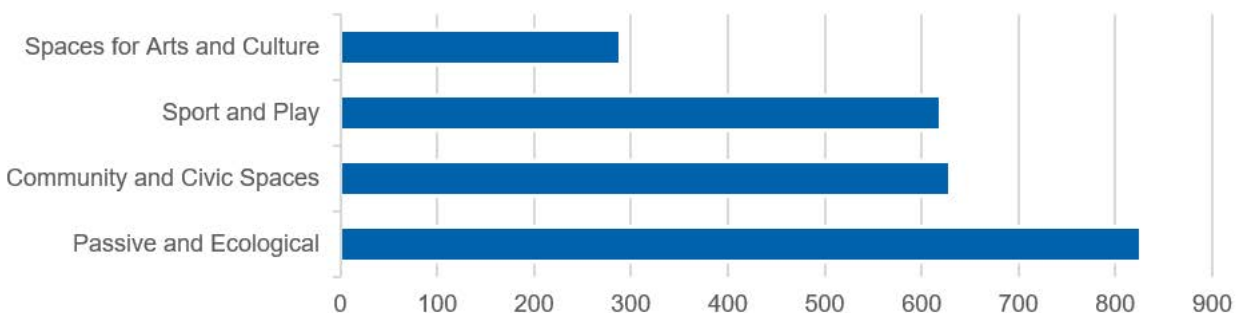
*Figure 3-11: What kinds of changes would you like to see in Mel Lastman Square?*

Other community feedback reflected this survey result. Mel Lastman Square is seen as a hub for public gatherings and community activities, but many want more space for families and seniors. Many community members also want more greenery, plants, and natural landscaping to offset the heavy concrete presence. There were calls to replace or enhance the grass areas, improve shade, and integrate more flowers or plants that can soften the space. The maintenance of water features and improvement of the aesthetic value of the space are important. Expanding Mel Lastman Square and making it more accessible are also key priorities for improving its functionality and appeal.

Safety was identified as a concern in Mel Lastman Square for many, with several calls for security patrols, better lighting, and stronger measures to deal with vagrancy and public disturbances. Users expressed a need for increased security to ensure that the space remains safe for all visitors, particularly during events. The safety of children and families in the square was highlighted.

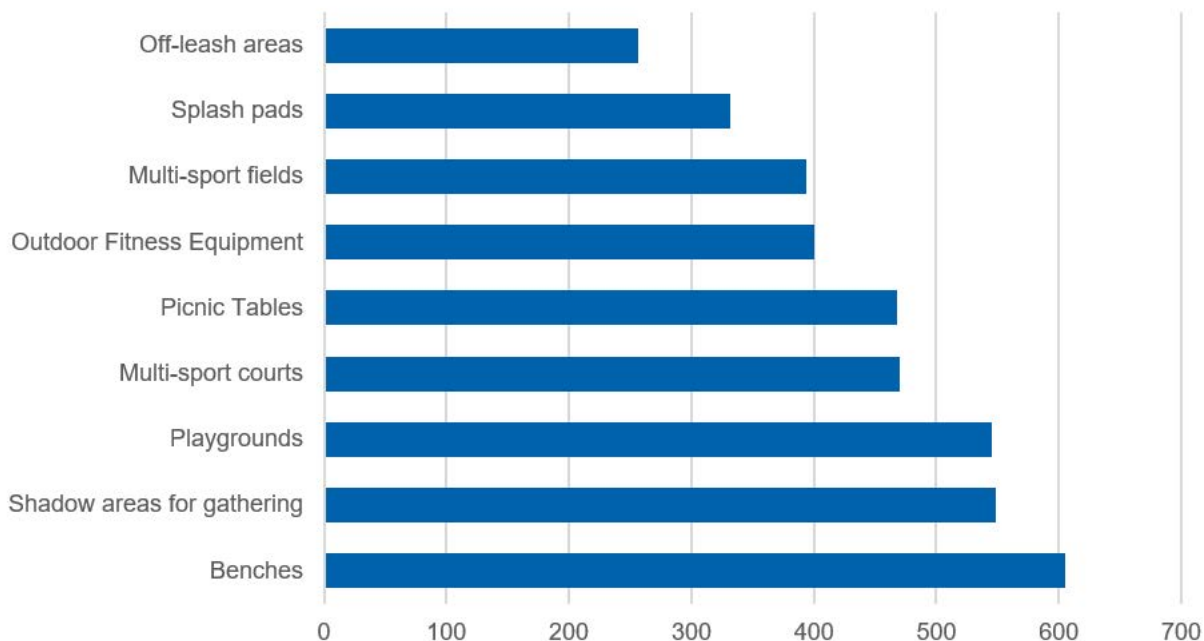
### 3.5 Parks and Environment

Survey respondents were asked what type of activities should be prioritized for the proposed parks along Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road. As illustrated in Figure 3-12, the most popular activity was passive and ecological, followed by community and civic spaces and sport and play. This response is underscored by feedback throughout Phase 2 engagement in favour of more trees and access to green space, including green space that can be used for Indigenous events and ceremonies. The prioritization of sport and play and community and civic spaces is supported by feedback that calls for space for families and children as well as places for gathering.



*Figure 3-12: What types of activities should be prioritized for the proposed parks along Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road?*

Survey respondents were also asked which new outdoor recreational facilities and amenities are most needed in North York Centre. Figure 3-13 illustrates the results, which demonstrate a desire for benches, playgrounds and shadow areas for gathering. These responses echo the preferred activities in new proposed parks, described above, and align with the common themes heard throughout Phase 2 engagement, including the need for comfortable resting areas and spaces for seniors, children and families.



*Figure 3-13: What new outdoor recreational facilities and amenities are most needed in North York Centre?*

The strong desire for more parks, especially larger ones, to accommodate growing populations was also expressed. Specific improvements that were mentioned include expanding Glendora Park and providing off-leash dog parks, though there is also some opposition to the latter. The

connection of parks using Wilket Creek Trail was supported as was the integration of community gardens in parks to provide residents with more opportunities to engage with nature and gardening. Gardens for Indigenous traditional medicines, along with programming for Indigenous youth, were also expressed as a need. Many participants also requested enhanced green corridors, linear parks, native trees, and walking/biking trails. These features are seen as essential for both mobility and environmental quality, creating calming and shaded paths for pedestrians.

The themes of safety and the need for amenities in parks and open spaces was similar to that of public realm. Safety was raised as a concern both in terms of personal safety when using parks in the evening and safety for pedestrians when navigating neighbourhood streets and transitioning to parks. Many participants asked for a separation of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to ensure user safety. Amenities such as shaded seating, public washrooms, accessible water fountains, garbage and recycling bins, and free Wi-Fi were desired, particularly for seniors and those with mobility needs. Maintenance and upkeep of amenities was seen as equally critical to the success of the installation of new amenities.

### 3.6 Mobility

There is a strong desire for improved connectivity across North York Centre. Suggestions included creating more pedestrian crossings, safer routes for cyclists, and better access to public transit. The importance of pedestrian safety, with a focus on better lighting, wider sidewalks and traffic calming measures, walkable neighborhoods and the connection between parks, schools, and transit hubs was emphasized. Some residents also suggested enhancing public transportation and increasing accessibility for people with mobility issues. Overall, survey respondents identified safety as the most important consideration for future street improvements (Figure 3-14).

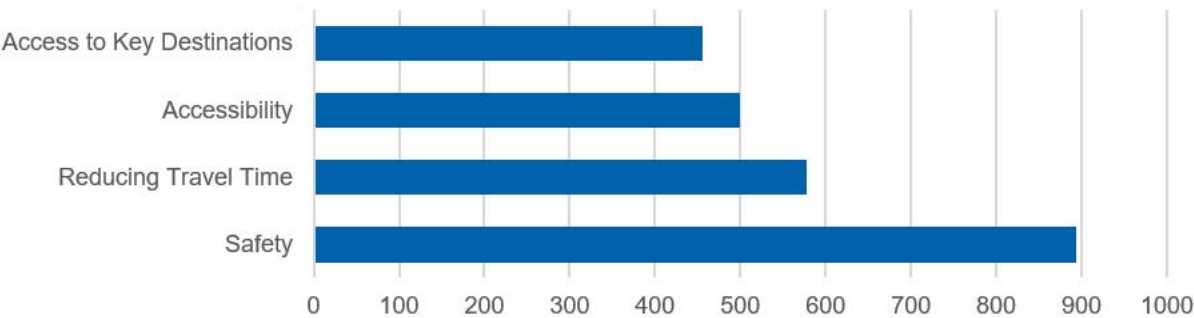


Figure 3-14: What values do you consider most important in identifying future street improvements?

## Cycling Infrastructure

Some respondents were in favour of safe, separated bike lanes and improved bike safety, especially for children and seniors. The need for better bike infrastructure near transit hubs and schools was highlighted, with suggestions for bike share stations and safer routes for cyclists. Feedback on bicycle infrastructure was mixed and many opposed more bike lanes, particularly in residential areas, based on perceived underutilization and potential impacts on traffic congestion.

## Pedestrian Crossings

Survey respondents identified a number of locations where signalized pedestrian crossings are needed, including at intersections that already have signalized crossings and other locations:

- *Intersections that are already signalized:*
  - Yonge Street and Poyntz Avenue (Yellow=Existing signalized intersection)
  - Yonge Street and Avondale Avenue
  - Yonge Street and Park Home Avenue
  - Yonge Street and Greenfield Avenue
  - Sheppard Avenue and Kenneth Avenue
  - Beecroft Road and Park Home Avenue
  - Empress Avenue and Willowdale Avenue
  - Empress Avenue and Doris Avenue
- *Planned signalized intersections (as part of Transportation Services existing capital plan):*
  - Yonge Street and Ellerslie Avenue (Green = Planned Signalized Intersections)
  - Beecroft Road and Drewry Avenue
- *Proposed signalized intersections (identified in the Emerging Preferred Option):*
  - Finch Avenue and Dudley Avenue (Proposed signalized intersection EPO)
  - Elmwood and Willowdale Avenue
- *Other recommended locations for new signalized crossings:*
  - Spring Garden Avenue and Kenneth Avenue
  - Yonge Street and Spring Garden Avenue
  - Yonge Street and McKee Avenue
  - Hillcrest Avenue and Doris Avenue

## Opening Local Streets

The EPO proposed the potential to explore re-opening some local streets to improve connections to Doris Avenue, Beecroft Avenue and Sheppard Avenue East. Respondents were asked to identify where street connections should be further explored and where they should not be considered. Much of the feedback was in opposition to opening streets, particularly opening east-west connections to Doris Avenue and Beecroft Road. The concerns related to traffic congestion associated with increased density and pedestrian safety.

## Parking

Parking was expressed as a major concern, with some residents calling for more parking spaces to accommodate the growing population, and others calling for less car-centric planning. Many expressed frustrations with limited parking and concern about the capacity of residential streets to accommodate both retail and residential needs. There were also calls for better design of street parking and pick-up/drop-off zones, enforcement of parking rules and more accessible parking spaces.

## 3.7 Common Themes

Common themes across topics included concerns about the impact of development on quality of life, opportunities for improving the tree canopy and green spaces, the potential for increased traffic, and managing wind and shadow impacts. Concern about infrastructure and service improvements keeping pace with growth, as noted above, was also an important common theme.

### Quality of Life

Participants expressed concern over a declining quality of life in North York Centre, attributing it to rapid construction, traffic congestion, noise, and inadequate infrastructure. Many emphasized that future development must not compromise livability, safety, or access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and transit. There is strong support for maintaining a vibrant, mixed-use environment along Yonge Street, but not at the expense of environmental integrity or neighbourhood cohesion. The importance of thoughtful urban design, walkability, equitable access to amenities, preserving neighborhood character, and a balanced pace of growth was a recurring theme.

### Tree Canopy and Green Space

There was strong support for preserving and expanding green space, increasing the tree canopy, and creating permeable surfaces. Residents want more trees, natural drainage, and tree plantings to mitigate flooding and the urban heat island effect.

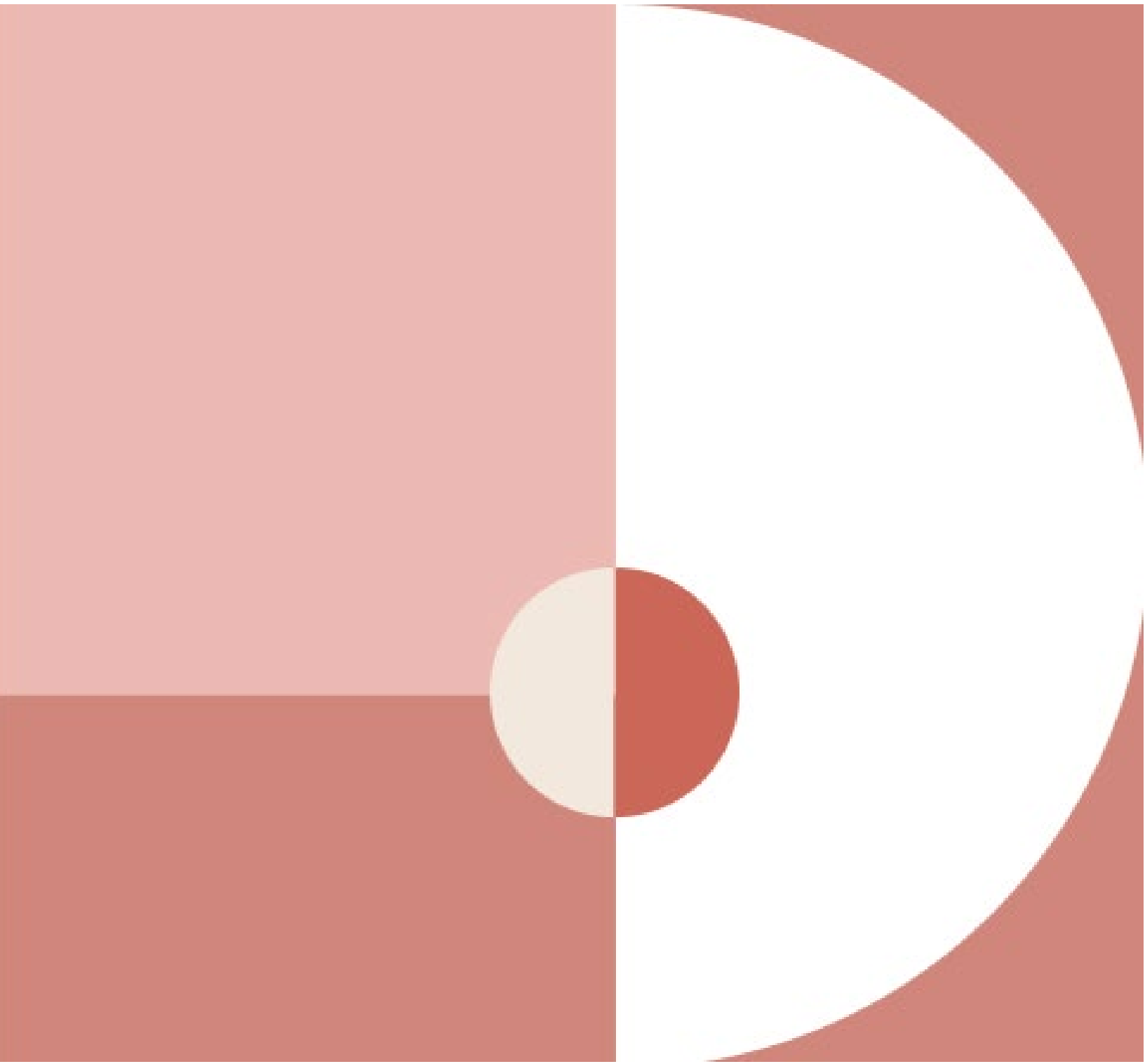
## **Traffic**

Addressing traffic and parking concerns was clearly expressed as a condition for further growth in North York Centre. Many participants understand that growth near transit stations, mixed uses and the creation of new housing of all types are needed. However, many expressed frustrations with the current traffic and parking issues and expressed concerns about how further development would exacerbate traffic, with some participants calling for a more thoughtful approach to traffic flow before allowing more density in the area.

## **Wind and Shadow Impacts**

Numerous participants expressed concern about the wind tunnel effect and loss of sunlight resulting from tall buildings along major corridors. These conditions were seen to negatively affect pedestrian comfort, especially for seniors, and reduce the livability and character of the neighbourhood. Participants emphasized the need to carefully manage building heights and spacing to maintain access to sunlight and ensure safe, walkable streets.

## **04. Lessons Learned and Changes Moving Forward**



## **04. LESSONS LEARNED AND CHANGES MOVING FORWARD**

The project team recognizes the importance of reflection and continuous improvement. This section identifies lessons learned in Phase 1 that helped shape engagement in Phase 2, and lessons learned in Phase 2 engagement that will be used to improve engagement in the next phase of work.

### **4.1 Phase 1 Engagement**

Two of the lessons learned in Phase 1 spoke to collaboration with the community, including thinking and working in partnership with community partners and advocates and continuing to meet and engage people where they are in their day-to-day lives. Throughout Phase 2, the project team carried forward these lessons through engagement with the LAC and their respective organizations and by meeting the community in-place through community pop-ups and PCCs. The third lesson learned, spoke to improving community outreach and event planning. The project team made improvements in Phase 2, including:

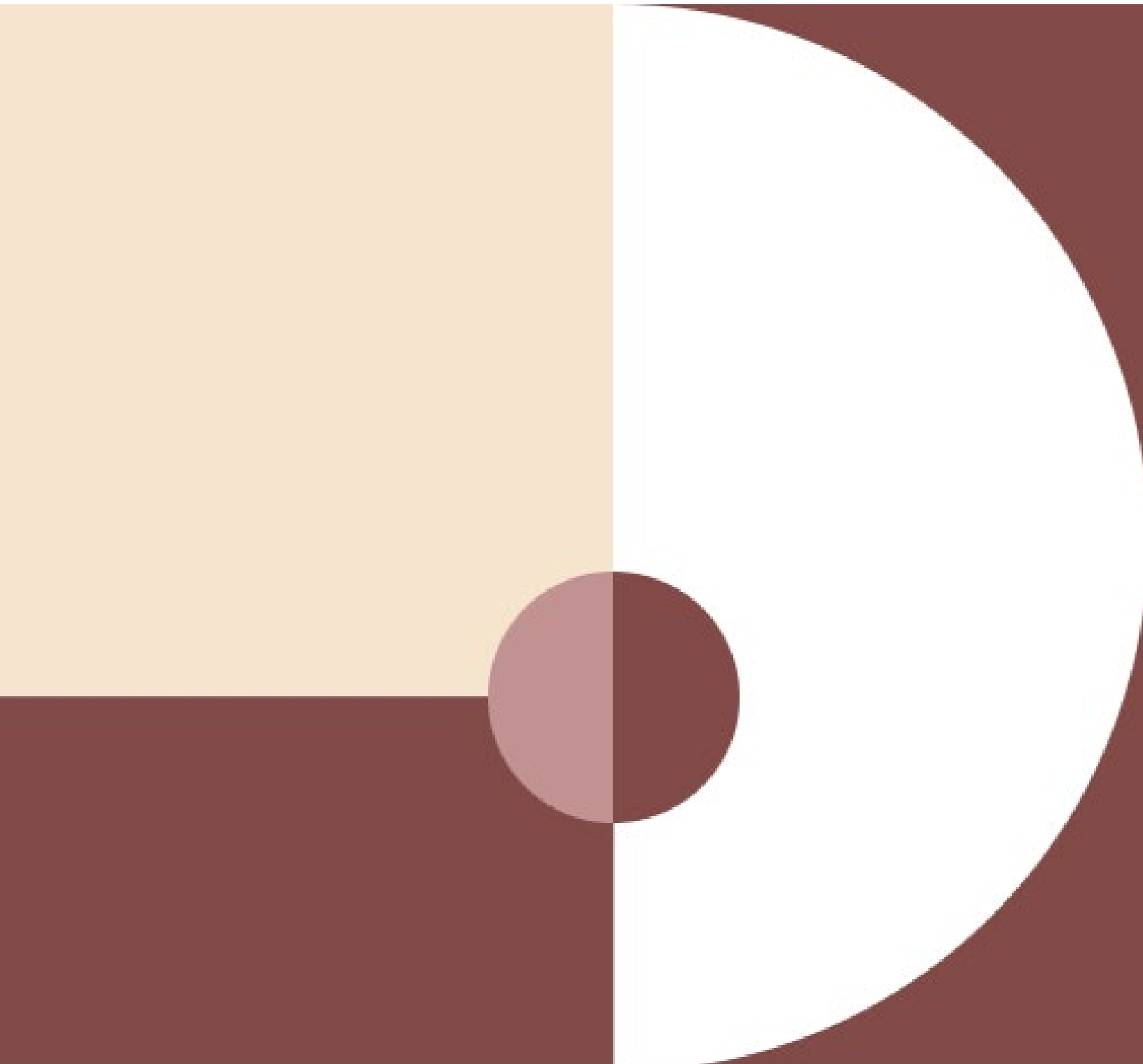
- Promoting online engagement through LAC member networks and e-updates distributed by the local Councillor. Alongside e-updates distributed by the project team and other communications, this effort resulted in nearly 1,000 survey responses in Phase 2 – a significant increase from Phase 1.
- Promoting the project web page during community pop-ups, which increased registration for project e-updates between Phase 1 and 2.
- Accommodating large crowds for in-person engagement events by planning three separate PCCs in locations across the study area. Compared to Phase 1, more people were able to comfortably attend events and discuss project materials with the team in Phase 2.

### **4.2 Phase 2 Engagement**

A large amount of work was completed in Phase 2, including the development of the alternative options, a detailed evaluation and the identification of an EPO that was described and illustrated through a series of maps. Although the project team made an effort to reduce the volume of information presented to the community and use simple and accessible language, concerns were raised by some members of the community about the amount and complexity of the information being shared. The online survey and community engagement toolkit were also useful tools for engaging the community in meaningful dialogue on various topics, but were too long and complicated for some community members. The project team will continue to look for ways to simplify materials brought forward to the community in the next phase of work.



# **A1. IDEAS SHARED BY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN PHASE 1**



## APPENDIX 1. IDEAS SHARED BY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN PHASE 1

The following patterns, meanings and themes were identified through analysis of the information shared during the Indigenous engagement events in Phase 1:

### *Indigenous history, culture and practices*

- An Indigenous Friendship Centre is needed in this area. It is the first place that Indigenous Peoples arriving in Toronto would seek
- Importance of Indigenous placekeeping in the area, to honour the history
- There is a desire to include and feature Indigenous history, languages, education and teachings in all public spaces (indoors and outside).
- The project should begin with the history of the land, and the First Nations that inhabited it
- Important to stress that water and the land are very important to the Indigenous community
- Integrate the use of the medicine wheel, and natural elements like water and earth, while considering the animals and all living creatures
- There is a need to work towards awareness of the nature of the land
- Consider opportunities for Indigenous place keeping, including areas for cultural practices and gathering spaces (also to include spaces that are of modern design for ceremonies)
- Provide educational opportunities for non-Indigenous people to learn of Indigenous culture and history
- Reach out to Indigenous artists to create public art and murals within the project area
- Suggestion for a Teepee-themed playground, park or splashpad, and Indigenous-themed public spaces

### *Community Needs:*

- Provide affordable housing, health care, language and education programs, employment opportunities
- Provide supportive programming for those in need
- Provide green space and outdoor spaces to accommodate a variety of activities and programming
- Design spaces and buildings to accommodate all ages and abilities

### *Collaboration:*

- The project should consider all voices
- Follow the recommendations outlined in the City's Reconciliation Action Plan
- Create 'pop-up' Indigenous Engagement events (e.g. a booth) where the Indigenous community gathers such as Pow Wows

### *Sustainability:*

- Future development and land uses should prioritize stewardship of the land
- Recognize community needs, including plants and wildlife
- Provide spaces to grow food and traditional medicines

### *Future Generations:*

- Community design should be supportive and adaptable to accommodate future generations
- Create economic vitality to attract Indigenous businesses to locate here (e.g. training, job creation)

